

CLAIMS:

1. An on-line payment System which includes as participants a System Administrator, Members, Merchants and Subscribers/Non-Subscribers (purchasers), characterised in that as a) System Administrator may or may not be a banking/financial institution; System Administrator guarantees payment to Merchants and charges the Members for purchases made by its Subscribers, b) One set of participating purchasers are Subscribers who subscribe to one or more Members, c) Another set of participating purchasers are Non-Subscribers who are not affiliated to any Member; they participate in the System by purchasing pre-paid perforated covers from a Member/Administrator containing user ID/password for a particular denomination; they would usually carryout low value transactions, d) Merchants are vendors of goods and services with an online store; they guarantee delivery of goods and/or services to purchaser (Subscribers) and charge the System Administrator for the value of all purchases made by Subscribers, e) Members may or may not be banking/financial institutions i.e. banks, credit card companies, schools, employers, clubs etc; Members guarantee payment to the System Administrator and have in place their own arrangements with their subscribing purchasers to recover money or moneys worth in exchange for the payments they make on behalf of Subscribers to the System Administrator, f) A Merchant can also be a Subscriber thus enabling him to make payment too, apart from receiving, to other Subscribers or Merchants,

2. A payment System for online purchases according to claim 1 wherein said System Administrator maintains a database of Subscribers, Members and Merchants, wherein each Subscriber is issued a System identifier (TOP ID) which is held by the Administrator and which must be provided along with password to Merchants, for low value transactions, when making a purchase and wherein during each online purchase transaction the Merchant forwards the Subscriber's TOP ID/password to the Administrator for validation and allows the purchase transaction to be concluded only if validation is received back from the Administrator.

3. A payment System for online purchases according to claim 2 wherein a purchase limit is set on the value of purchases a Subscriber may make, wherein during each online purchase transaction a) the Merchant additionally forwards the transaction value to the Administrator, b) Subscriber's purchase limit is determined by mutual agreement between a Subscriber and the Member, c) the Administrator checks that the total of the unpaid transactions in the account of that Subscriber (including the present transaction) does not exceed said limit, and if not, provides the Merchant with a further transaction validation allowing the purchase transaction to be concluded.

4. A payment System for online purchases according to claim 2 wherein the delivery address for the purchase of a Subscriber is preset and during each online purchase transaction where the Subscriber desires the delivery address to be other than the pre-set delivery address, the Subscriber provides to the Merchant an additional password, and the Merchant forwards the additional password to the Administrator for validation and the Merchant will despatch the goods to other than said pre-set delivery address only if validation is received back from the Administrator.

5. A payment system for online purchases which includes as participants a System Administrator, Member, Merchant and Subscribers/Non-Subscribers, comprising a) Merchant's web servers, each capable of accepting online purchase orders, b) internet devices to which all parties to the System have access, c) an Administrator server connected online which holds a database of Members and their Subscribers, d) said Merchant's web servers being programmed to transmit purchase charge data to said Administrator server after accepted purchase orders are made by a participating Subscriber, e) said Administrator's server being programmed to periodically send purchase charge data to Members in respect of purchasers who are Subscribers of those Members, f) and means enabling said Members to remit payment for said purchases to said Administrator.

6. A payment System for online purchases according to claim 5 wherein each subscribing purchaser has a System identifier (TOP ID), said Administrator's database stores Subscribers' TOP IDs and passwords, said Merchant's web server being programmed to interrogate said Administrator's server which is programmed to check its database for a match between the Subscriber entered TOP ID/password and the database and respond to said Merchant's server with a purchase validation message if a match is found, or respond with a purchase denied message if no match is found.

7. A payment System for online purchases according to claim 6 wherein said Administrator server is programmed to accumulate the value of each purchase made by a Subscriber held in the database and store the same in a Subscriber's account, a predetermined purchase value limit is stored for each Subscriber, and wherein the Administrator server is programmed to check the database to verify that the total of unpaid transactions in the account of that Subscriber (including the current transaction) does not exceed said limit, and if not, to transmit to the Merchant's server a validation message enabling the purchase transaction to be concluded, and if said limit is exceeded to transmit to the vendor server a purchase denied message.

8. A payment System for online purchases according to claims 6 and 7 wherein said Administrator database stores Subscribers' preset delivery address and a change of delivery address additional passwords, said Merchant's web server is programmed to receive a purported change of delivery address additional password, interrogate said Administrator's server, and said Administrator server is programmed to check its database for a match between said purported change of delivery address additional password and the additional password in said database and respond to said Merchant server with a change of delivery address validation message if a match is found or respond with a change of delivery address denied message if no match found.

9. A payment System for online purchases according to claim 1 and claim 5 wherein for large value transactions a Subscriber nominates various signatories with varying signing power amounts and also designates combinations of signatories that are required to complete a particular online payment transaction within the System. The said System Administrator maintains a database of Subscribers' multiple signatories, their various combinations thereof, for large value transactions, wherein each signatory of the Subscriber has a System identifier (TOP ID), signing power amount, password, name etc.

10. A payment System for online purchases according to claim 9 wherein for large value transactions a Subscriber upon electing to purchase or to make payment to another Subscriber/Merchant shall provide one or more of his signatories' TOP ID, in conformity with predetermined signing arrangement, at Merchant's web site. Each signatory to the Subscriber shall do so separately if multiple signatories are required to complete the transaction, thereafter Merchant shall forward the TOP ID and a sales transaction reference number to Administrator's server; thereafter Administrator's server shall pop out a new window carrying that signatory's TOP ID and sales transaction reference number, the window shall prompt the signatory to provide his password and name etc. Upon receipt of said information from signatory/signatories, Administrator's server matches the information with the information in its database and advises accordingly to the Merchant whether the transaction is approved or not approved.

11. A payment System for online purchases according to claim 10 wherein there are multiple signatories to a large value transaction the System Administrator shall use different servers for authenticating different level of signatories to a Subscriber; for instance A level signatory's sign-in information is received and authenticated at server A and B level signatory's sign-in information is received and authenticated at server B and so forth; each of these servers separately conveys to the Merchant's server about approval or non-approval of that particular signatory's sign-in; thus

making it almost fully hacker proof at System Administrator's end as no single server would have the sign-in information for all the signatories to a particular payment transaction of a Subscriber.

12. A payment System for online purchases according to claim 1, claim 2, claim 5 and claim 9 wherein Subscriber and its signatory/signatories shall be able to make online payment to other Subscriber and Merchants from System Administrator's web site also in circumstances where they do not need to provide underlying sales transaction reference number or there is no underlying purchase by Subscribers.

13. A payment System according to claim 12 wherein Subscribers/Non-Subscribers to the System shall be able to make payment to a Merchant for their off-line purchases too, provided the Merchant makes available internet access to the shopper at its store.